

Summary of the Technology Network Meeting with Vice President Gore

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3:00 – 5:00

by

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This meeting was part of a series of meetings of this type the VP is holding with leaders of the high tech business community around the nation. Informally termed "Gore-Tech" meetings, these are now institutionalized with a staff and the issuance of guidelines to target the discussion topics. Since the meetings are in the process of building a "membership" around the nation, it is called the Technology Network.

The concept started in Silicon Valley with key leaders there such as John Young, former CEO of HP. Brook Byers, a GT alum and partner in the venture capital firm of Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield and Byers, has been a player in several meetings. John Doerr, another partner in the firm has been very active as well. From comments by staffers, I gather that Brook is also a strong supporter of the VP, but this is not the case of all those who participate in the forums. Since the nominal principal purpose of the meetings is to learn, educate, and develop support for positions, republicans as well as democrats are included. Brook was mentioned prominently in our meeting, by both staffers and the VP.

Our meeting was organized by Wade Randlett, who is designated as the Political Director of the Technology Network and is a permanent staff member. The meeting was chaired by Ken Byers, Brook's big brother, and fellow Tech alum. Ken arranged to get me invited, apparently with Brook's approval.

This was the fifteenth Gore-Tech meeting, with six of the previous meetings occurring in California. The others have taken place in locations like Seattle, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Raleigh-Durham, etc. all places with high tech communities. This was the first visit to Atlanta. I was the only representative of the academic world present. The participation by a university president is unusual, since these functions are normally dedicated to the business perspective. The VP and his staff indicated that they saw this meeting as one of a series and that they would return to Atlanta for another one in the future.

In addition to Brook Byers, I would note one other important point about linkages to the VP. One of the key staffers at our meeting was Ansley Jones, listed as a senior political advisor and director of public liaison. Ansley is a native of Atlanta, and she is the daughter of John Dillon, a Tech alum and a member of GTAB. John was at the meeting and introduced me to Ansley, who said she would be glad to help us in the future if needed.

Other participants included businessmen (no women in the group) from various components of the high tech community in Atlanta. I don't remember them all, but a sampling included: Charles Brewer of Mindspring, Ron Moore of HP (he reports to Lee Ting of GTAB), Jim

Dillenger, formerly of IBM, now in startup businesses in education, and John Dillon of Cravey, Green & Wahlen, an investment business (the largest of its kind in the SE). Most of the companies were relatively small. Several were ATDC spinoffs (e.g., Mindspring). A surprise guest was Rodney Stanley, the new Secretary of Transportation. He made some broad statements about high tech and the future of transportation (smart cars, roads, etc.) and asked the group to keep this in mind. When introduced to me, he commented that Georgia Tech was doing some important research for the DOT and that he appreciated this.

We were encouraged to talk about broad issues, not just ones bugging us in a focused way about our business. The issues that came through included:

1. The lack of availability of skilled employees.
2. The H-1 visa issue and allowing foreign workers to more freely enter the U.S.
3. Problems in K-12
4. Changes in the "e-rate" that would keep a balance in funding for internet access for rural schools.
5. The economy and how to keep it strong to support the sales of newly developed technology products.
6. Access to the home by competing content and service providers across existing telephone power networks.

During the discussions, the VP demonstrated his knowledge of a number of technology fields. He advocated the following:

1. Support for the H-1 visa issue, but only if compensated by a substantive training program for U.S. workers. He said we could not simply invite foreign nationals here to solve our skills shortages without offering U.S. workers an opportunity to play as well.
2. Support for an educational initiative that would put a virtual 3-D image of the globe in 200 institutions that would allow students to see a vast array of data for any place on the planet. Ken Byers lobbied for one for SciTrek and got a promise from the VP this would happen.
3. Support for the maintaining a subsidy that equalizes the e-rate for rural and urban schools.

Overall, the meeting was a good one and allowed me an opportunity to speak about a number of programs we have underway that address some of the concerns mentioned. I was able to talk briefly about our K-12 programs, particularly our involvement with the Global education initiative. While the VP did not arrive till about 3:30, he stayed till 5:00 and engaged fully in the discussion.